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ABSTRACT

Articles in these two issues of the newsletter on teaching adult literacy in English as a Second Language (ESL) address the following topics: (1) the definition of literacy; (2) the development of learning skills in students parallel to the language skills learned; (3) multiple literacy in a Thai refugee camp; (4) confusion resulting from more than one name given to an item (e.g., toilet paper and bathroom tissue); (5) students' uses of their literacy; use of block print vs. upper/lower case printing; using pictures for communication; (6) field trips; finding a balance of language skill areas in literacy instruction; (7) using student-generated photographs; and (8) correction of student errors. Professional announcements and book and textbook reviews are also included. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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ESL Literacy Bulletin

November, 1986, Volume 1, No. 1

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ESL LITERACY BULLETIN

November, 1986 Volume 1, No. 1

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LITERACY?

Newsletters keep people in touch with each other. This one is not meant to be US to YOU, but ALL OF US to EACH OTHER. We want you to send us ideas and news, but you might wonder what we mean by "literacy". To clarify what we mean for this newsletter, we want to take up a little space to define it.

With the OED as our source, we looked up LITERATE, LITERACY, ILLITERACY, and ILLITERATE.

LITERATE is the oldest of the four. It was borrowed as an adjective sometime between 1432-50. It's original meaning was "educated, instructed, learned." It took 100 years to become a noun and 462 years (1894) for Americans to broaden the meaning of the noun to "one who can read and write."

ILLITERATE came into use as a borrowed adjective in 1556 meaning the inability to read and then in 1628 as a noun meaning a person unable to read.

ILLITERACY appeared in 1660 as the condition of being illiterate.

LITERACY is an Americanism. It first appeared in the "New England Journal of Education " in 1883 meaning "The quality or state of being literate...esp. ability to read and write." but clearly with the "esp." meaning.

Americans then have muddied the waters. By adding the meaning of ability to read and write for literate and for coining LITERACY, they...we... have created confusion.

This newsletter will define LITERACY only as the ability to read and write. What that ACTUALLY means, we leave open. But we will not discuss "Stylistic Texture in Student Essays". That topic we leave to the San Francisco University "Literacy (sic) Conference" in June, 1987.

If you are interested in what literacy ACTUALLY means see Roger A. Clark's "Definitions of Literacy: Implications for Policy and Practice". Adult Literacy and Basic Education. Vol. 8, No. 3, 1984. Clark talks here about native language literacy. We'd like someone to interpret his 4 categories of definitions for ESL. Are they the same?

ESL Literacy Teachers: Teaching 'Directability'

by John Driscoll, San Francisco Refugee Community Programs

Because some adults who cannot read and write also cannot speak English, it has fallen to certain ESL teachers to teach what we now call 'ESL/Literacy'. Yet the skills we teach in beginning reading and writing appear radically different from those where functional speaking and

listening are the main goals. The communicative classroom fantasies that the ESL teacher has learned to use effectively in recent years to teach ESL or EFL to English literate and formally educated students seem very different from the activities of a literacy classroom: sight/sound correlation, writing and sight-word practice, phoneme or syllable analysis etc.

Creative ESL/Literacy teachers reconcile these differences with wonderfully involving activities in the full range of approaches from the phonic to the experiential. But even these teachers may find their efforts stymied by a lack of progress in the student's ability to respond to more formal exercises. For example, sight-sound correlations may go very smoothly with teacher to student or student to student at the blackboard, but when placed in the context of an individual exercise on paper the same correlations can fail miserably.

The common sense response to this difficulty is that we need to develop our ESL/Literacy students' study skills parallel to their literacy and oral English skills. There are ESL/Literacy curricula that now address this issue. However, I believe that to overcome what could be called the 'formal education' barrier in the limited time scale of the typical ESL program requires first some understanding of the relationship between our own skills as educators of the usually educated and the needs of the usually uneducated ESL/Literacy student.

The impression sometimes made by ESL teachers is that our profession is staffed by frustrated actors. In reality, the ESL teacher is more like a stage or movie director, working to achieve an on-going, ever changing improvisation in the classroom. Students are 'directed' into playing roles in fantasy playlets, or are happy to direct themselves in playlets that are more or less congruent with those introduced by the teacher. A high degree of student 'directability' or 'self-direction' is therefore crucial to success in this kind of ESL classroom.

But ESL/Literacy students usually lack the unconscious and automated 'study skill' behaviors that can access the direction of the teacher or reproduce an appropriate self-direction in classroom exercises. We hear 'I don't know' or 'I don't understand' muttered in Cantonese, Khmer, or Spanish even after the most well-paced explanation of an exercise or practice. Nor can ESL/Literacy students often experience the wonderful spontaneity and emotional outlet that a role-play or song can achieve in other ESL classrooms. At that moment, they are not coming away from the highly cognitive, self-conscious role as 'serious student' into the relaxed 'fun time' of the role-play. Rather,

the conventional classroom is an on-going emotional torture for them. They don't know where to look when the teacher points at the board because they haven't learned how to look. They don't know what to 'analogize' - model their own responses on certain things that have happened so far in the class- because they haven't learned how to select the components of their response.

The key to dealing with this problem is, therefore, first to understand that we must teach 'directability' or 'self-direction' to our students as well as teaching the formidable skills associated with using literacy in the English language. Unfortunately, our own consciousness of classroom directing skills is extremely limited, and this makes teaching directability very inaccessible to most teachers. We develop our own teaching style after many years of exposure to teaching through a tortuously long education and the mix n' match of adjusting these highly indoctrinated teaching models to the demands of now being the nearest person to the blackboard. Yet are we aware of ever having been taught directability? Didn't it just happen somewhere baack in first or second grade when we decided it might be worth sitting still and listening in class- at least some of the time?

In contrast, the ESL/Literacy student may come to the class without your highly sensitized but unconscious 'directability'. This puts teacher and student already at cross-purposes in the profoundly important area of perceptions as to what is actually going on in the classroom. The teacher may overinterpret the student's success in responding to the teaching point, imagining it is a response to direction, whereas the behavior may only be random or imitative. The student may interpret the teacher's direction in overly literal ways or simply not notice it at all.

What seems necessary, therefore, is research and experimentation into how to teach directability and self-direction - how best to teach our ESL/Literacy students to respond to the learning environment we provide for them, an invironment focused by direction from the teacher. To begin this exploration, what we need is a classification of range of teacher instruction, cues, and class activities matched to the particular student skills necessary to participate or respond.

It would be wonderful then to seek to develop those skills in a systematic way as part of an ESL/Literacy program. We would not just be developing the literacy skills that are a prerequisite of further education. We would also be seeking to develop an easier and more functional access to

future teachers and perhaps all members of the new culture that our students will meet in their new lives in America.

Multiple Literacies in Ban Vinai
by Lynellyn D. Long

(This paper was sent from Ban Vinai, a Lao refugee camp in Thailand. It's too long for this newsletter so we're sending it on to the CATESOL Occasional Papers where we hope you can read it in full. Ms. Long has given us permission to abstract her paper.)

In the early '80's Ban Vinai, a Lao refugee camp in Thailand, was known for its preliterate highlander population, Hmong, Mien, Htin, Khmu', etc. As the new immigrants' lives changed dramatically in the U.S., the lives of those in Ban Vinai underwent similar changes: Their new behaviors and patterns symbolize underlying processes of refugee camp life FIRST Gender and generational experiences. SECOND The increasing importance of literacy. THIRD Individual decisions about literacy may reveal refugee's hopes, fears, and aspirations about their future. All this has influenced my own thinking about ESL literacy in the U.S.

GENDER AND GENERATIONAL 67% of those in the camp are under 25. Their time has been spent in education and recreation. They are mostly the literate part of the population. The policy adopted was to teach people literacy in their own language or Lao first. Women ,formerly the gender not literate, began to take an interest. By 1986, 43% had received formal education. 93% of these women found it of personal value. The gender gap is closing as young people of both sexes are educated. Being literate carries prestige among the young. One girl said her ideal husband would be someone who could read and write several languages. Literate young men hold available jobs because they are literate. Traditionally Hmong consulted their leaders when they had a problem. A recent survey showed 46% no longer do this.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION Ban Vinai might look like a traditional Hmong village, but it's not. It started out as a camp of about 12,000. It now is about 45,000 due to a high birth rate, transfers from other camps, and a small in-migration. In 1980 Hmong resettlement in the U.S. peaked at 27,242. In the late '70's, the Hmong developed a new religion and a new writing system. It contains 90 characters which appear to be strongly influenced by Chinese and Lao. But it's losing out. Young people now prefer Chinese as well as Chinese culture and seem to be reestablishing their roots in China where 5 million Hmong live. Literacy activities are increasing. People use CAL phrase books and

Thai or Lao dictionaries. Women can make a receipt and make change. Western religion, formal education, and the official camp bureaucracy are major forces behind a literate population. People are making a new permanent life for themselves in the camp. People have not planted fields for years. "Thus, the book has replaced the buffalo in their inheritances."

LITERACY AND IMAGES OF THE FUTURE Thailand and the U.S. are both unhappy aabout the Hmong wanting to stay in Ban Vinai. 77% of the camp was undecided about their future. Funds are being cut for services in the camp. Thailand is closing camps. Pressures are forcing camp people to sign up for interviews to go to the U.S. In '81, people were moving through fast and learning English as quickly. Now it's different. The oldest prefer to return to Laos and die there. Most young people want to resettle in another country...but which? They dream of "China, the U.S. or Australia--kung fu, disco, education and economic opportunity." Parents are caught in the middle, and it is they who must make the decision.

PERSONAL REFLECTION ON ESL LITERACY "As we say in Lao, (learning to read and write) requires heart." Heart=enormous time and effort. Literacy for the old means a continuing distancing from the past and all they are familiar with. For the young it means hope for the future. First language literacy is extremely important for second language literacy. But it is possible to be literate in several languages ane even to study them simultaneously. First language literacy is also a response to a need to preserve their culture and past traditions. When that has been established, they can go on to a second language. And what of these camp people who are coming to the U.S? "They have spent much longer in refugee camps than those who came before them. In some ways, they are more used to our world from their time in the camp. They are certainly more educated and literate. They know more about bureaucracy, western religions, and medical systems, and formal schools. But, in other ways, they are more paralyzed by this life. They have learned to resist by waiting or declining to get involved. When they may eventually resist our efforts to teach them the street signs or consonants, we must ask ourselves what lies behind that resistance. For refugee camp life and its ways are not easily forgotten."

A Spade is Not a Spade: It's Bathroom tissue

BY TINA MARTIN

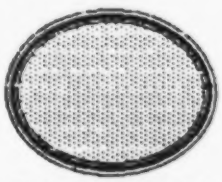
Recently I reread an article I wrote nearly a decade ago when I took a course in ESL adult literacy at San Francisco State University Extension. When I reread it, I

realized that the problem I discussed ten years ago still exists: We're teaching students to read generic words that are difficult--and sometimes impossible--to find on the items they might want to buy.

In my nine-page paper from 1977, I mention several examples, but here I'll give only one illustration--one I came across the first time I used an activity involving ads. I had cut out and taped that Wednesday's supermarket ads on the wall in various parts of the classroom and given the students a ditto on which a dozen items were listed without their prices. The students were to walk around the classroom and find the prices on the ads. Among the items I listed was toilet paper, for which the students were unable to find the price because the product was called "bathroom tissue". The ad, in turn, was more direct than the toilet paper/bathroom tissue package itself, which said the following:

(Bathroom tissue appears in tiny print at the bottom) The brands and addditional information ("Squeezably Soft") on products are like headlines, and the names of the products are hidden in small print like the catch phrase on legal documents.

Obviously, as in all reading matter, the reader has other clues to identify each item. Many illiterate or near-illiterate people recognize a product by its shape, size, color or design. (Sometimes the name itself is a design for those who can't read.) Our students are very clever, so I'm not worried that they will go without. Rather, I'm interested in how we teachers can use ads and labels on items in supermarkets in our reading exercises. I think we've got to use matching/circling word exercises that use (1) the ads posted on supermarket windows and (2) the labels from the items on the supermarket shelves. We've also got to learn not to call a spade a spade if the students are going to have to read it as Tissue Paper.



ESL USES OF LITERACY

One of the things that Shirley Brice Heath did in "Ways with Words", her study of literacy in three Carolina towns was to ask her informants how they used their literacy. Her respondents were all native speakers. How do ESL students differ, if they do?

Recently, we asked a number of our intermediate and advanced literate ESL students how they used their literacy. This was an informal survey but it can serve until a more formal study can

be made.

WRITING--Letters topped the list for both native and English writing. Some noted "business" letters as well as just "letters". Twice as many students wrote letters in their native language as in English. Next came checks for advanced students followed by forms for all students. Advanced students listed, on their own initiative, 12 different kinds of forms ranging from applications for jobs to forms from their children's school. Writing lists came next. Shopping lists were most often cited. From then on it was a random list including money orders, deposit slips, phone numbers, and elevator buttons.

READING--Our students put newspapers at the head of the list for what they read in English. But twice as many get their news by reading it in their native language newspapers. Magazines rated next followed by a random list including songs, the Bible, menus, ads in newspapers and on TV, comics, letters from their child's school, notices in apartment buildings, directions at work, and their child's homework.

READING AND WRITING IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE--Students use their native language literacy mostly to write letters. It was far up the list. Everything else was random and included shopping lists, a diary, and addresses. Among letters they included "messages" and notes. In their native languages they read newspapers the most ,followed by letters, books, magazines, messages, menus, and then the list becomes random.

(Survey conducted by Kim Lee, Wynne Pong, Warren Collins, Pilar Carlan of Alemany Community College Center, San Francisco)

How ESL Beginning Literacy Students Use and Want to Use Their Literacy

Roun You Poeung, a Cambodian, and Mueiseng Saetorn, a Mien, both teachers at the Refugee Community Programs at the YMCA in San Francisco, did a survey of 12 Mien and 9 Cambodian students to find out how they used their literacy.

All the Mien are illiterate in Mien. They are marginally literate in English and this is what they told their Mien interviewer they had written in the past week: Their children's names, prices, phone numbers, names and addresses, stories, numbers, names. Six of them said they had written nothing. They want to write: Names, addresses, phone numbers, numbers, lifeskills, forms, lists.

The Mien managed to red during the past week: Phone numbvers, bills, bus numbers, children's names, prices, street signs, bus signs. Four said they had read nothing. This is what they would like to read: Sight words, street names, signs, what someone says to them, stories, everything.

Six of the 9 Cambodians are literate

in their own language. Four of the 6 literate people had read letters from friends and relatives in Cambodian. One had read a book and notes. All had read letters in Cambodian during the year. Three had used a Khmer-English dictionary. Four had written letters during the year.

The picture was quite different in English. None had written anything in English during the week. But they told their interviewer that they had read notices on the street, street names, notes, and books.

When they were asked what they wanted to read in English, they listed: Books (5), applications (6), letters (4), addresses, street signs, notes, AFDC applications, notices. This is what they would like to write: Letters (6), application forms (6), other forms (3).

(Editors' note: This is an important survey. It follows, on a small scale, the work of Shirley Brice Heath in Ways with Words.

Let's not stop here though. What is going on in your area? Do you have a bilingual staff that can interview pre-literates and ask them about their uses of literacy both native and second language? What do they WANT to read and write?)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fraida Dubin has been teaching a graduate course in teaching literacy at the University of Southern California. It's an elective option for TESL MS degree. Contact her for information at the USC School of Education.

John Driscoll will teach a weekly ESL literacy methods course from Wednesday, March 11th to Wednesday, April 8th from 6:30 to 9:30 for UC Extension. Contact him at (415) 673-0258 or Marty Egan at UC Extension (415) 642-1173.

Yvonne Safwat made a video tape on literacy methods at a Thai refugee camp. It's well worth viewing. Contact her to borrow her tape at Alemany Community College Center (415) 885-5212.

If you want to visit a literacy class, contact these people at their schools: Betsy Portaro, Alemany CCC, 1860 Hayes, S.F.; Jack Wigfield, Alemany CCC, 750 Eddy, S.F.; Ann Whiteside, Mission CCC, S.F. (This is a class of Spanish literacy for native Spanish speakers.) Yvonne Safwat, Alemany CCC, S.F. Yvonne's class is featured in the October 24 West County Times.

Grace Holt writes from Sacramento: "The Family Literacy Program will be located at 4 different sites in Sacramento and Stockton. Two sites will be in Sacramento with one site designated for Spanish speakers and the other designated for the Lao, Hmong, Mien, and Cantonese language groups. There will be two main areas of instruction, ESL literacy and parenting skills. Students will meet class five hours per week with three

hours devoted to ESL literacy and two hours of instruction in parenting skills. We hope to begin instruction in mid-January.

Betsy Portaro, Cindy Henderson, and Debra Wilensky have been chosen to give workshops on their supplement to the San Francisco Master Plan called, " Beginning ESL for Non-literate Adults." The supplement includes teaching aural/oral and literacy skills. Contact Dissemination Network for Adult Education.

BOOK REVIEWS

Barton, Mary and David Barton, Research and Practice in Adult Literacy. Sheffield City Polytechnic Department of Education Management for the Association for the Recurrent Education: Sheffield (1985). This is a valuable book and can be obtained by writing to: THE ASSOCIATION FOR RECURRENT EDUCATION, %Ms. Margaret Cook, Centre for Research into the Education of Adults, Cherry Tree Buildings, University of Nottingham, Nottingham NG7 2RD, England. The cost is 3 pounds. The book summarizes a one-day seminar on literacy in 1984. It answers few questions, but it does pose many many good questions and suggests subjects for research. The major themes were (1) There should be better communication between researchers and practitioners (2) Our notions of research should be broadened to include students' and tutors' evaluations of their work. These are some random quotes, "Writing the language, rather than just reading it, gives people a voice--and hence power." "The current pressure is for literacy to be taught strictly to satisfy job demands with no pretence of more general educational or social aims...Resist these pressures..." "There was...a great eagerness to build on, and get recognition for, the embryonic research activities that grow naturally from everyday teaching and learning. In these activities, as researchers and teachers, we are co-learners with our students."

Bell, Jill and Barbara Burnaby, A Handbook for ESL Literacy. Alemany Press:Hayward, 1984. This book DOES answer questions. It's the best thing to have come out so far. Enough said!

Passage This is a new journal distributed by the Center For Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007. I don't know the cost. Volume 1:no.2, Summer, 1985, contains, "Forum: ESL Literacy". Ten literacy teachers were asked to discuss "phonics" versus the "whole-language or meaning centered approach". Yvonne Safwat has an article in the latest issue on a literacy project she worked on in a refugee camp in Thailand. If you use pictures in your teaching, you should get Volume 1:no.1,

Winter/Spring, 1985 and Hvitfeldt, Christina, "Picture Perception and Interpretation among Preliterate Adults." This article comes out of Hvitfeldt's PhD thesis at Wisconsin. "Adults from traditional preliterate societies often perceive and interpret drawings, pictures, and symbols differently from individuals socialized into modern literate societies."

Renard, Don and Wayne Haverson, Teaching ESL to Illiterate Adults. Center for Applied Linguistics: Washington, D.C., 1981. Don Renard is the editor of Passage and Wayne Haverson has published a great deal on ESL literacy. Who will review this for us?

Samuels, S. Jay, "Letter-name versus Letter sound Knowledge in Learning to Read," The Reading Teacher, Vol 24, p. 604, 1971. Do you still teach letter names? This article might make you think about that practice. Samuels gives a history of the whole issue of letter names versus letter sounds. Some of us argue that letter names belong in oral/aural ESL work, not in literacy.

The following citations come from papers at conventions and articles. We haven't had a chance to abstract them. Can anyone do one for the next newsletter? If they are incompete, it is because we found them that way.

Harste, Jerome C., Virgina A. Woodward, and Carolyn Burke. Language Stories and Literacy Lessons. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational /Books, 1982.

Smith, Frank. Joining the Literacy Club. Vancouver: ABEL Press, 1984.

Weinstein,Gail. "Literacy and Second Language Acquisition: Issues and Perspectives," TESOL Quarterly, 18 (3), 1984.

Scribner, Sylvia and Michael Cole. The Psychology of Literacy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Robson, Barbara. 1981. Research Reports in Newsletter. Southeast Asian Refugee Studies 1 (3): 1-2 and 1 (4) : 1. University of Minnesota

Goody, Jack (1977) Domestication of the Savage Mind. Cambridge University Press, New York.

IN DEFENSE OF BLOCK PRINT

Our Major script choices in literacy are (1) majuscule/upper case/BLOCK (2) minuscule/lower case (3) cursive/handwriting/the Palmer Method.

I have long supported BLOCK as a solution to ESL early reading and writing tasks. Many teachers have objected, so let me now defend my choice.

Any choice must depend on (1) frequent native writer use (2) native reader acceptance (3) student's ease of learning.

I have a number of instances of native

writer use. This summer I received two postcards from friends traveling in Canada and Ireland. One was from an artist in her middle 40's, university educated, an art instructor married to a San Francisco architect. The other was from a 30 year old accountant, a graduate of San Diego State University. Both cards were written in BLOCK script.

In late August, the New York Times carried a story about a 41 year old Seattle newspaper reporter who found that his odd working hours kept him from much contact with his 11 and 14 year old sons. His solution was to leave notes to his sons. He fastened them to the refrigerator door every morning. He died recently, but his notes have been published and 40,000 copies of the book have been sold. An exact copy of one note printed in the "Times" showed that it was written in BLOCK script.

A survey of how our Alemany literate ESL students use their literacy appears in another section of this newsletter. A frequent use is filling out forms. Many of those forms demand not just printing but BLOCK printing.

Point (2), how acceptable to a native reader is BLOCK print? I don't have any evidence on this but Tracy Ousdahl of San Francisco State University is conducting a matched guise experiment to see if readers downgrade someone because of the script they use. We'll have the results for the next newsletter.

Point (3) ease of learning. Again I have no research. I can only report from daily experience with a large group from various language backgrounds. BLOCK printing is clearly the easiest. The vertical stroke for all these letters B,D,E,F,H,I,K,L,M,N,P,R,T is the same as for the first letter in the Arabic language, aleph. We might even squeeze J in there. Literate Chinese students will give you a different stroke order for T, but the strokes themselves are what they are familiar with. Ditto Korean.

Therefore, if educated native writers use it, many application forms demand it, and students can learn it more quickly, doesn't BLOCK printing make a lot of sense and lead us then immediately to cursive for signature purposes. We can skip minuscule for writing altogether.

Now what about reading? We have no choice now. Students have to learn to read whatever they get, and obviously we can't not teach them to read minuscule because it is all around us. But so is BLOCK.

Have you ever traveled to a country where you couldn't read the language? You may never have picked up a newspaper or magazine, but on the way in from the airport through the city and then on your first walk around the city, weren't you surrounded by signs? So are our students. And what do they see from the street? In my walking-bus-streetcar

trip to school every day, my guess (not scientific) is that I see 85% BLOCK, 14.5% minuscule, and .5% cursive.

You don't have to read your street sign to find your way home, but it's one of the things Mien and Cambodian literacy students told us they wanted to learn to read. All the street signs in San Francisco are BLOCK. Only the green street signs for motorists on the islands in Van Ness Street are minuscule.

The cursive signs are usually family named businesses like Kaufer-Stadler Religious Books and Zim's Restaurant. But there are also the ubiquitous Coke Cola signs.

One day I decided to test my impressions further so I walked past school a few blocks into the Tenderloin where most of my students live. There was only one difference: Cursive increased slightly.

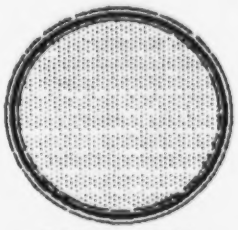
It's a curious picture sometimes, too. My streetcar under Market Street has all the safety rules and words of caution in BLOCK. My bus down Van Ness has its rules mostly in minuscule. Pay 'n Save, a discount store on Market, violates a rule. PAY and SAVE are in BLOCK, but the "n" is in minuscule. Isn't that a no-no?

Choice of script sets off violent arguments in literacy meetings. Anyone care to add to the din and attack my defense of BLOCK? (Jack Wigfield)

THE NEXT ISSUE

We are anxious to hear your comments and for you to send us material for the next newsletter. To get your next issue, please send a 44 cent (We have more to say than 22 cents will carry) stamped self-addressed envelope to Susan Lawson, ESL Literacy Newsletter, Alemany Community College Center, 750 Eddy St., San Francisco, CA 94109. The next issue will be out no later than May 1st. But we'll put out a new one sooner if we get enough to print. Tell us what you are doing, what you are reading, what you are using, what you need help with, what you want someone to research.

(Editors: Carole Glanzer, Susan Lawson, Jack Wigfield. Our thanks to John Crume, Fran Baron, Director of Alemany CCC, and especially to Lori Brooks for her time and computer expertise.)



LATE NEWS

Addison-Wesley will put out a new ESL adult literacy textbook next spring. For more information write Addison-Wesley, 1843 Hicks Rd., Rolling Meadows, IL 60008. ATTN: Patty Gold/ESL

******

Jill Bell and Barbara Burnaby reviewed all the ESL literacy texts for the CATESOL Convention in April. For a copy send a 44¢ stamped self-addressed business sized envelope to Susan Lawson, ESL Literacy, 750 Eddy St.,S.F., 94109

ESL ADULT LITERACY

BULLETIN, MAY, 1987, VOL. 1: No. 2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 COMMUNICATING WITH PICTURES (Susan Lawson)
2 CRACKING THE CODE: Questions (Wigfield); Answers (Bruder)
3 FIELD TRIPS AND ESL LITERACY (Tom Powers)
4 OK, OK, TEACH ESL LITERACY, BUT WHEN? (Yvonne Safwat)
6 USING STUDENT GENERATED PHOTOS IN LITERACY (Tim Walsh)
6 REACTIONS (AND REBUTTAL) TO BLOCK PRINTING
7 PICTURES:THEIR USE AND ABUSE IN ESL LITERACY (Jack Wigfield)
8 HOLD THAT RED PENCIL? (Editors)
9 BOOK/JOURNAL NOTES
10 ANNOUNCEMENTS
11 ADDENDUM: (Examples of drawing out meaning)

COMMUNICATING WITH PICTURES

In early 1976, the National Development Service and UNICEF conducted a study of 9 different parts of Nepal to learn if it was possible to communicate ideas and information by using pictures only. They also wanted to know what kind of pictures were the most meaningful and if different colors had special meanings. Over 400 adult villagers, none of whom had ever been to school, were shown over 20 pictures.

The study concludes that the pictures by themselves were not enough. Many (but not all) could recognize the objects shown in the pictures, but the IDEAS BEHIND THE PICTURES WERE ALMOST NEVER CONVEYED. Even if they recognized the objects, the villagers did not expect to receive ideas from pictures. They did not necessarily look at a series of pictures from left to right, or assume that there was any connection between pictures in a series. Pictures with symbols such as an arrow, a check, an X, or a skull and crossbones had no meaning.

However, there was a plus side to using pictures. People were interested and attracted by pictures, even though they may have needed help to interpret them. If a picture's message was explained, they remembered the message when they saw the picture again.

Realistic pictures with a minimum of background detail are the easiest to understand. The villagers liked bright colors and felt orange and yellow were colors for gods. Black was for devils. The pictures were interpreted literally so the size of the object had to be correct.

Copies of the full report are available from National Development Service, Kirtipur Campus, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal or UNICEF, P. O. Box 12187, Kathmandu, Nepal.

As further proof of how culture bound pictures are, I offer the following mildly scientific evidence: On large pieces of cloth, the Hmong people of Laos embroider picture-stories that tell of their daily lives . I showed enlarged sections of one story cloth to 10 Americans and one teacher from Hong Kong. All the Americans I asked had either lived or traveled in other countries so they had experienced another culture first hand. No one identified all the activities and characters on the story cloth correctly, although the woman from Hong Kong had more right than anyone else.

A hunting scene was identified as a wedding or a party. The animal sacrificed to ensure good hunting was seen as dinner. A picture of a man and woman walking together was believed to be two men, or two women, or two children. Important details were overlooked.

Since these findings, I have firmly put away the amazement I felt in the Nepalese study that a profile of a pregnant woman could be viewed as a goat. Perhaps the best way to

proceed is to have the students tell the teacher what they see in the picture. If it's way off base, go back to the realia the teacher began with. Keep checking to be sure teacher and students have the same perceptions. Remember beauty is not the only thing in the eye of the beholder. (Susan Lawson)

CRACKING THE CODE: Some questions and answers

CRACKING THE CODE in the Pitt series in English as a Second Language comes with high expectations. The senior author, Mary Nelson Bruder, is published and is well known in ESL. The book is part of a series that has produced a good phonics reference manual, and it comes out of The University of Pittsburgh which also has a high reputation in ESL.

The book, however, raises several questions. I want to list them and then ask Mary Bruder to defend her choices. The second author, it should be noted was Elaine Williams, who seems to have done the initial work and then unfortunately died at the young age of 30. That was a loss.

These are the questions that came to mind as I looked at the book:

Why after B. H. Seward's "Teaching Cursive Writing to EFL Students" in ELT, Vol 26:2, 1972, do you still teach students to write letters in ABC order? Seward clearly shows that grouping letters based on their distinctive features is wiser. Why not group B with P, R, D, rather than with A and C?

Why teach those baroque cursive capitals? Many educated native English writers now use block capitals, the same letters they use to fill in forms that ask for block printing. Two of those educated writers are Jimmy Carter and his Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance. When we teach block printing, we have also taught our students their cursive capitals.

Why teach letter names to a beginning literacy class? Letter names have nothing to do with reading or writing. When my students who come to me already knowing letter names, see an unfamiliar word, they spell it. That produces nothing. If they make a guess at the sounds of those letters in the context they are reading, many times they guess the word. But spelling it just frustrates them. In Horace Mann's words, it's the power (sound) represented by the letter, not the letter name, that is important.

The English spelling system, like the Thai system, sometimes separates letters that represent one sound. Why do you wait until page 135 to teach that the A in APE is connected to the E? It is as much a part of the E as the H in TH. The same goes, of course, for i..e/e..e/u...e/o...e. Why not, from the beginning, use that wonderful old elementary school line, "When two vowels go awalking, the first one does the talking." ?

Why teach students to WRITE block (uppercase), lower case printing and cursive? They have to learn to READ all those different scripts, but can't they just learn to write block for all their printing needs, and then cursive for either sociolinguistic preference ("That's the way my teacher/boss/American friend writes.") or speed (debatable) or a legal signature (What IS a legal signature?)?

Why make students wait so long before you let them write something that comes out of their own heads? Aren't we after communication as soon as possible? Doesn't all that drill make them lose interest, drop out, stay home whenever possible, wonder when they can use their hard won literacy no matter how imperfect?

And finally, and perhaps most importantly, why have you put all your eggs in the phonics basket? For ESL students, doesn't the phonics basket have lots of leaks? Wouldn't just a good shot of phonics be all that is necessary? Do you really think that all that phonics at the very beginning makes much sense to them? (Jack Wigfield) (Mary Newton Bruder and Elaine Williams. CRACKING THE CODE:Learning to Read and Write in English (Beginning Level ESL). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986)

MARY NEWTON BRUDER'S REPLY

My reply must be prefaced by several remarks which reveal both the practical and the theoretical parameters of the book. For a number of years prior to beginning the work, Elaine and I had observed the very slow progress made by beginning students (below 200 TOEFL) whose native language did not use the Roman alphabet. In order to better understand the phenomenon of learning a language with a different writing system, we undertook a course in Arabic. That experience, our knowledge of the literature on reading and our years of classroom teaching experience served as the basis for decisions regarding Cracking the Code.

[Now to your questions.] (1) ABC order? In posing the question, the writer cites an article on teaching cursive writing. We were not attempting simply to teach cursive, but to decode, encode and to recode English. Knowing the alphabet has many uses beyond learning to read, such as using a dictionary or a telephone directory, for example. My response: Why not ABC order? As for grouping similar shapes (p and b), anyone who has experience with learning a very different writing system knows that this leads to hopeless confusion. Arabic speakers, whose language does not have a phonemic distinction, have a terrible time learning "whether the leg of the p goes up or down."

(2) Letter names? With very few exceptions (w,x,y) the sound of the letter is found in the letter name. The sounds of the letters have a great deal to do both with reading and writing.

(3) All eggs in phonics basket? This relates to number 2 in our insistence on learning the sound-symbol correspondences. Current research (Perfetti, 1985[Perfetti, Charles A. Reading Ability. New York:Oxford U. Press]) shows conclusively that unless learners establish the "alphabetic principle" they do not become fluent readers. Our experience has shown that low level readers with different alphabets have a hard time establishing the alphabetic principle, thus our decision to have them practice in many different ways. Of course they should move as quickly as possible and move out of the text as soon as they can. Any responsible teacher knows that.

(4) Baroque capitals? It may be that the writer's colleagues all use only block printing, but as we observed in the Pitt academic classrooms, the teachers used all sorts of writing systems including the ones we included in the text. We decided that our students would be at a disadvantage if they couldn't read the chalkboard writing, so we chose the most difficult style.

(5) Many different systems? It is another fact from psychology of learning that learning is facilitated by use of many different sense modalities. Learning to write facilitates reading, just as saying the letters and words aloud facilitates memory.

(6) Writing something from the student's own head? Of course, that goes without saying, and any student who can do this shouldn't be using Cracking the Code in the first place.

In writing the answers I can see that there is not very much disagreement about what should happen in a language class, but perhaps the writer expected Cracking the Code to be something it never purported to be and tried to use it in ways we hadn't intended. That is an author's recurrent problem and I do not see any solution. (Mary Newton Bruder, General Linguistics, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Pittsburgh)

[Now, what do *you* think? If you write for Vol 2: no. 1,(October) give us your ideas on the questions raised here. ESL adult literacy is in its infancy (embryonic stage?). We hope discussions like this will help it grow.--The editors]

FIELD TRIPS AND ESL LITERACY: The First Field Trip

"The more experience and knowledge you bring to the page, the less print you have to read." (recent Journal of Reading) The Language Experience Approach is based on this idea and field trips lead to language experience stories, but when your ESL adult students are ready for teacher-prepared reading material, field trips seem like the ideal way to base their prepared reading on experience. Here is a shortened report by Tom Powers of a first field trip taken from The Bulletin of the Refugee Women's Program Volunteers in San Francisco. ESL lessons from texts about department stores should make more sense to these students after this experience:

I had been teaching English to a class of three Cambodian women in the Tenderloin for about six weeks before I decided to broach the subject of a field trip. [They agreed and their husbands agreed to let them go.] Once on the way I suddenly felt at a loss. We had so few words in common. I pointed out objects in stores and food items in the market whose names we had studied, and my students responded. Then we rounded a corner and I realized I was walking by myself. The three women had stopped down the block. They were craning their necks up toward the peak of a building under construction. We were five minutes from their home and I got the feeling they had never been off the block.

As we walked toward Geary Street, more and more sights grabbed their attention. A jewelry shop, a camera store, theaters, and art galleries, a wooden sidewalk vendor

hawking Middle Eastern delicacies .

As we passed the Clift Hotel, a detour seemed in order. I led my students into the ornate lobby. We pulled up short. I felt barely less intimidated than these women who perhaps had never seen such luxury. We stared in silence at the tapestries and paintings. They seemed to announce not just a degree of wealth but the magnitude of a culture. We beat it out of there. I urged my group on towards a terrain where the firm grip of democractic traditions might provide us all with a more sure footing.

"Macy's!" was our cry and through the fool's glitter of Union Square, I pulled them along, the patter of our new vocabulary picking up tempo. "Restaurant." "Movies." "Painting." "Blaster." "Macy's!"

Just inside the front door of Macy's, my students pulled me back. My best student said something I could not hear. When I moved closer, she repeated, "I have no money."

"This is Macy's" I said. "We're not going to buy anything. We're just going to look." They followed me timidly, at first afraid to step off the walkways onto the carpeted areas where the merchandise was displayed. Finally curiosity got the better of them. They began looking at clothes, asking me to verify the price tags, which at first they could not believe, but which soon became a source of great amusement to them ($120 for a skirt.) They seemed to be clucking disparagingly over the quality of the fabrics. My shyest student held her hand to her mouth and giggled when I indicated she would look good in some of the slinkier numbers.

On the way home we stopped for chocolate chip cookies, which the women seemed to eat with greater fortitude than relish. As we walked back into the Tenderloin, a transexual prostitute approached and asked me for a cigarette. The women walked on. They were back on their block. I wondered if they were back to screening out the seediness of the world in which they live, nine blocks from Macy's. (Tom Powers)

OK, OK, TEACH ESL LITERACY, BUT WHEN?

Note this quote from 1968: "Although the Arabic writing system is simple in the ideal, in practice it is a bit complicated. Since mastering the language itself...is quite a burden for Americans, the favored approach just after the War was to postpone the writing system in order to tackle as few complicated problems at a time as possible. Psychologically, however, most students feel achievement when they attack the writing system. This exotic script symbolizes for them the real language...We have introduced the Arabic script earlier and earlier each succeeding year." (Ernest McCarus and Raji M. Rammuny). If those Americans learning Arabic wanted the writing system at an early stage, what of our ESL students? Certainly our Chinese students come with the expectation that real English is written English, but what of those Mien, Hmong, Cambodians and Lao with little formal education and little experience with reading and writing in their communities? Should literacy skills be introduced the first day of class or should it be postponed? How long should you postpone it? If a priority is set up, should it be oral/aural or literacy first? My present early intermediate class has a number of upper intermediate students in fluency but they are being held back by their literacy skills. They can't pass written tests, and they can't handle the written material presented in those upper intermediate books. How do you feel about this? What do you do in your school, and are you happy with that solution?

Here is one answer from Yvonne Safwat, back from a year in a Thai refugee camp where she introduced a literacy program. She published on her program "Getting Them on Their Literate Feet", in Passage: a journal of refugee education, Vol 2:no.2, 1986 and her video tape is also well worth viewing.

It is interesting that learning Arabic was used as an introductory example. I remember taking a few Arabic lessons years ago, which began immediately with reading script. Since Arabic is a very phonetic script, I felt a sense of accomplishment in being able to decipher the exotic and beautiful scrawl, but I don't remember learning a phrase of oral language. With an accomplished teacher, who may have used methods popular today in teaching oral-aural language, I may have had the pleasure of learning both how to read as well as how to communicate.

Just as a first language learner has years of listening and speaking before tackling the written word, we must build aural-oral skills before expecting people to read and write language. I'm a strong proponent of LEA, Language Experience Approach, when teach-

ing reading and the underlying rule in using this method is that the written material must be dictated by the student. How will that be accomplished if the student has no oral language? Yet as soon as I am able to pass on the meaning and sounds of a language to my students, I supply them with the written form. The visual representation of a word can help to trigger memory, as a picture would, only if the word exists in the learner's mind, as a real and known thing. Reading must be attached to meaning just as oral language must be understood, rather than parroted. In the same light that we should not assume a student understands what he is repeating back in rote repetition practice, we should not think that by being able to manipulate the sound-symbol system a student is comprehending the word behind the form.

So why teach phonetics? If we look at the decoding as a necessary tool in first beginning the task of reading, just as repetitious oral response helps the student develop the muscular agility to pronounce sounds unfamiliar to him, we can see the worth in such rudimentary exercises. Learning the consonant sound/symbol correspondences is a relatively easy task being that there are a finite number of consonants with a majority having only one sound, yet so many teachers fail to isolate the task and assume students will somehow miraculously pick it up by learning numerous sight words. Isolating consistent sound/symbol patterns found in word families, (i.e. NIGHT, RIGHT, MIGHT) enables the reader to decode words not memorized as sight words. A new reader may be able to sound out words that already exist in his oral vocabulary to which he has not yet been introduced in print, or by recognizing the initial sounds he can guess what a word is that is known but has temporarily been forgotten.

When teaching initial consonants, I introduce a new letter like H by using it in words they already know, (i.e. HOUSE, HOSPITAL, HAMBURGER, HELLO, HOT) so that the new reader attaches the sound of the letter to a meaningful word. This is partly to provide something with which to associate the sound but mostly to attach a meaningful purpose for learning the letter. I immediately begin to introduce one syllable words using vowels like [æ], [ə], and [a] so that the student can manipulate the consonant sounds already learned: HAT, HAS, HAD, SAT, by substituting initial or final consonants. In the same vein that repetitious oral practice helps the mouth produce new sounds, exercises in decoding can help the eye to recognize the symbols that represent those sounds, without necessarily focusing on meaning.

Nevertheless, I like to challenge my students to read for meaning as quickly as possible. After having introduced and practiced the consonants D, S, M, T, C, and H, I will combine these with familiar sight words and ask my students to read and illustrate the meaning of the following: "Dad is mad at the bad cat. The cat sat on his hat." When students who perhaps are illiterate in their first language are able to decipher sound as well as meaning from that reading, they feel delighted.

However, as a teacher, I want most to pass on the underlying reason for reading: to communicate purposeful, relevant information and ideas. Thus, sound/symbol instruction is concurrent with approaches to teaching reading for meaning; LEA, sight words, and TPR stories.

When we ignore the need for students to acquire the skills necessary for reading, we are limiting their exposure to the English language as well as to the possibilities of success in an English speaking and reading society. In order for a student to succeed beyond the first level of ESL in the classroom, he is usually required to read passages in textbooks. Those who can't read do not advance or eventually drop out of school altogether.

Just as my Arabic lessons failed to meet my communicative needs by not stressing oral language, we as teachers must establish a fine balance in providing our students with the opportunity to obtain proficiency in all skill areas. However, we will often fail to meet every student's expectations or needs. Two days before leaving my beginning level class, a Chinese student humbly offered criticism of my teaching methods by giving me a note written in Chinese and translated for my benefit:

> Teacher:
> We are a lot of new immigrants.
> Study English has much difficulty.
> I think so teach every day English
> word and sentences, first write on black-

board, ask and tell we read. After see pictures, speak. Will come in head. Not forget.

I'm sorry.

Mei Xian

As much as I would have liked to satisfy her needs, I could not forgo my principled belief that the written form of a word should follow the oral production and understanding of that word. (Yvonne Safwat)

USING STUDENT GENERATED PHOTOS

Drawing is an excellent way for students actively to engage with the white page and add meaning to literacy learning. But drawing is not the only visual medium available. Another valuable tool for tapping into preliterate students' extensive visual experience is photography. Following are some of the activities we've undertaken to help students have something of their own to read and write about.

POLAROID PORTRAITS I first showed the class a model photo and simple text. Students read the accompanyng worksheet which was illustrated with a xeroxed copy of a Polaroid portrait of two people. Students, depending on their literacy level, drew on and colored the model photocopy, completed a cloze, and wrote a letter related to what they saw in the picture.

Next students learned how to use the camera to make their own pictures by reading written instructions and practicing. Each student took a shot of two classmates. Students who were in the picture wrote accompanying dialogues, in pairs. The next day, students who took the picture wrote about the picture they had taken.

In the following lesson, students created new contexts for images of themselves: They drew backgrounds (either "indoors" or "outdoors") on xeroxed copies (I had whited-out the backgrounds of the original photo. Caution: Don't try to white-out the original polaroid photo), and they wrote about these self- edited images.

Finally, students read and wrote about the experience of taking Polaroid shots.

Another word of caution. When I whited-out the background and put in a teacher-created scene (a ferry boat ride on S.F. Bay), the whole exercise collapsed. Let them work from their experience doing the project and their ideas about what the "new" picture should be.

A FIELD TRIP Now that they were familiar with the camera and the idea of working with photos, we took a field trip to the local McDonald's. Each student had to take one photo. This time we used an Instamatic. With overnight developing, we had the picture ready for class the next day. Using xeroxed copies of their photos on work sheets, they began to write about their experience. How much and the level of their writing depended on their stage of development. Those stages ranged from near absolute beginner to post-literacy. Whatever their stage, however, they were excited with the project, and by working with each other they had learned more about (and probably from) their classmates.

With these activities, students created not only their own linguistic texts, but visual "texts" as well. They also learned to associate written texts with personalized, individual images. Next step is to connect images in a written/visual narrative. Any suggestions? (Tim Walsh)

REACTIONS (AND REBUTTAL) TO BLOCK PRINTING

In the first number of vol. 1, an argument was made for BLOCK print as the only type of printing our students needed to learn to ***write***, to produce. (Remember, reading is different. For reading you must react to everything.) These are some reactions to my suggestion. "This subject generates excited debate among teachers because it is trivial and unimportant. Get on to something meaty." -- "I teach a type of lower case printing that moves easily into cursive. It's almost just a matter of connecting letters for cursive." -- "You don't need cursive for a legal signature. 'Legal signatures' are exactly what people write, period." -- "My son is in a French immersion (*French bi-lingual*) program. His French teachers teach only cursive from day one. His English language teacher has taught him to print upper and lower print. When I ask him to write, he wants to know how I want it, French or English style. He does both equally well. There to your claim that BLOCK is easier. If it doesn't hold for children, it must not be true for adults either." -- "You spoke to a

fundamental problem. Exactly *what do* we teach? I have stuck to tradition, but you made me think about orthography more deeply. The Mac Plus font is full of choices for reading, but what do we expect ***them*** to ***handwrite ?*** " -- "I was pleased to find you defending BLOCK in the first newsletter. I too have long supported BLOCK, and in fact chose to use it throughout the first ninety pages of my new book, Reading for Life: A First Book for Adults and Their Tutors. (Virginia French Allen. Wheat Ridge, CO: Spring Institute for International Studies) [BLOCK gives you capitals for proper names and first words in sentences so] you can introduce names and sentences almost immediately. Furthermore, BLOCK letters appear on license plates, on the backs of athletes' jerseys seen on TV, [and] in the blurbs of comics. We are also finding that there is less chance of confusing 'b' and 'd' (as dyslectics do) when the upper case B and D are learned first."

I want to respond to only one comment. It came in a letter in the SF Chronicle. "...Students usually cannot fluently read messages written totally in capital letters (BLOCK) until about fourth grade...Primary level children can easily read [comics like] Farley, Dennis the Menace and Fred Basset, all in lower case. Too bad the wonderful fantasy in Calvin and Hobbes cannot be read by young children because the message is in capitals." (Consultant, Beginning Reading and Writing, Napa). Since this is testable, I decided to run a little experiment. I cut out 5 comics, all those mentioned above plus Peanuts (BLOCk) and For Better or For Worse (BLOCK). from the Chronicle. Three, then, were all in BLOCK; one was all , upper/lower case; two were a mixture that is, some characters spoke BLOCK and some spoke upper/lower case. (Our Napa writer should note that two of the strips she claims are written in upper/lower case, Farley and Fred Basset, are mixtures.) Granted, my population of five was small but all were under fourth grade. Four were Americans and one was English. All were readers although one was at a very early stage. Results: None of them had any trouble with any of the comics, including those in BLOCK. One told her grandmother, who carried out the study with her, that BLOCK was the easiest for her. My informant from Bristol, England wrote, "Alex Graham's was the easiest." That strip, Fred Basset, is about a basset hound that speaks-thinks in upper/lower case, but whose human counterparts speak BLOCK. In the Basset strip that I chose, 40% was BLOCK.

Now, all you Mothers, Fathers, etc. help us out. Can your pre-fourth graders read messages in BLOCK? But more importantly, can your adult ESL students?(Jack Wigfield)

PICTURES: THEIR USE AND ABUSE IN ESL LITERACY

I've just come from a Workshop where almost everyone talked about the use of pictures. There seemed to be three types of picture use: (l) the picture is used to give a meaning. Picture of APPLE followed by the word "apple" (2) Pictures are used to remind students of the sequenced events of a story, preferably a student generated story. "Ath is a student. (Teacher quickly draws stick figure of a woman) Last week she went to San Jose. (Draw outline of city high-rises.) She drove with a friend. (Draw car with two people) She had a flat tire on the way. (Draw car with flat.) etc. When the students retell the story, the pictures/drawings remind them of the story events. (3) Student-drawn pictures which are then written or talked about.

The first use is the traditional one and most books are full of them. Picture dictionaries are probably the epitome. We know from research by Christina Hvitfeldt (Passage: a journal of refugee education, Vol1, No. 1, 1985) and from many others that this use is dangerous, and the farther the student's culture from the culture of the picture, the more dangerous it is. When you know the meaning, then you know the "meaning" of the picture, but not always vice-versa. The picture of a city can "mean" CITY, BUILDINGS, SAN FRANCISCO, CONGESTION, CRIME, DANGER, HAPPINESS, DOWNTOWN. One presenter used a page of heads illustrating a wide range of "feelings". If, instead of telling us the "feelings" which ranged from "confused" to "amused", she had had us tell her the feelings, how many of us would have given the same feeling for the same picture? Once we knew that the tenth head was "puzzled", we had no problem, but not necessarily vice-versa. I just took a copy of Desmond Morris's Gestures , from my shelf and opened it to page 68 where there is a picture of a German man

with the index finger of his right hand pushed slightly into his right cheek about where you might expect a dimple to be located. I showed the picture to my wife and asked her what this gesture meant. She replied, "He has something wrong with his teeth." The caption reads, however, "The German cheek screw gesture meaning that someone is crazy." And remember, if I had explained the meaning in German, a language my wife doesn't know, she would still have thought that the man had a toothache.

Use (2) above presents fewer problems. If the students understand the story, if they know the meaning, then the picture simply reminds them, not teaches them, of that meaning. They become like narrators of an on-going event. Once that page of heads in (1) above has been defined and understood, it becomes a tool full of potential in system (2).

The third use of pictures, where students first draw a picture of what they mean, has interested a number of people recently. The meaning, and it is meaning after all that we are interested in, comes from the learner. Students don't end up with meaning--they start out with it. Or, you might say that they *transfer* their meaning/drawing to sound (by telling their story) or to visible language by writing it. But this use has its problems, too. What if my German student draws his picture showing a man with etc. and then because of his limited English, he asks me for help with the English? Without a context to help me, I might indeed teach him that his friend has a toothache and he should go to a dentist; not that he is crazy and should consult a psychiatrist.

If you are interested in this approach, there are three books that you should look at. Norma Shapiro and Carol Genser's Draw It Out (to order, write them at 5448 Allott Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91401) shows you how to make quick simple drawings to remind students of events. This should be very helpful for use (2) above. It might also help your students in use (3).

Think! Draw! Write! by Jean Marzollo and Katherine Martin Widmer (Fearon Teacher Aids, a division of David S. Lake Publishers, Belmont, CA 94002, 1982) is a good example of use (3). Each page has a minimal picture and directions. Page three shows an empty plate with a knife, fork, and spoon. That's all. The directions below the picture read: "Draw the best meal you ever ate. Then write a story about it." But be careful. This is for native speaking children in grades 1-3.

Sharron Bassano and Mary Ann Christison are two names that need no introduction and sure enough they have produced a book called Drawing Out (Alemany Press, 1982). This book is for ESL adults. Actually though, age makes no difference. It is, like Think! Draw! Write!, an example of type (3). Students first draw something and then either talk about it or write about it. The first part of the book is a manual telling the teacher the procedure. The second part is full of examples of what students have produced. That part is divided into drawing out grammar, situations, creativity, and finally vocabulary. In another part of this newsletter, the questions of whether to correct students' work is posed. This book says clearly, "Don't correct." If a student asks for help, or course, it's given, but "In our opinion, 'red-penciling' or crossing out errors on someone's 'work of art' serves only to invalidate." John Shumann, in his Foreward, sees the students' writing as an example of their Interlanguages, and there should be "nothing to prevent us from enjoying it." We would only add enjoying it and exploiting it because it's their strongest second language.

This summer, Newbury House will bring out yet another book using the type (3) system, a revision of First Steps in Reading and Writing.

What do you think of all this? Where do pictures/drawings fit in your teaching? (Jack Wigfield)

HOLD THAT RED PENCIL?

Many literacy teaches use the Language Experience Approach (LEA). In this approach, students write their own material. It helps solve the problems of vocabulary, grammar, and content. The big question with many ESL teachers, however, is whether to correct what students write. Pat Rigg in her excellent article on LEA, advised against any correcting as did Sharron Bassano and Mary Ann Christison in Drawing Out. We agree and for this reason.

The easiest language to learn to read is your first or native language. Surely everyone agrees on that. But the NEXT easiest is your Interlanguage. An Interlanguage is the closest approximation to the second language you are studying. (Corder calls it an *idiosyn-*

cratic dialect. Nemser calls it an *approximate system.*)

Reading Standard English, the teacher's language, is a step more difficult than reading the student's own Interlanguage. It's interesting to listen to some students read passages that they have written and had corrected by the teacher. They often read exactly what they originally wrote even though what they are looking at is different.

Interlanguages change. They develop. True, some things never change, and the term *fossilization* has been used to describe those structures, but the spoken language your students start with is certainly closer to radio/TV English when they leave you and their regular ESL oral/aural teacher at the end of the semester. And that will be reflected in their LEA writing.

Don't worry about the mistakes. Don't worry, providing they are from that individual student's Interlanguage. Group stories in LEA for ESL students are questionable on this account. Students in a literacy class usually have a wide range of oral fluency. The result of a group story could conceivably represent a number of different Interlanguages and also be some distance from Standard English.

How do you feel about this question? Do you correct? Is spelling an exception? Is material produced by a group with a mixed fluency level still better than material written by individuals?

BOOK/JOURNAL NOTES

If you have Hmong students, there is a lot of help for you from people who have taken an interest in the language and culture of these people from Laos.

Bruce T. Downing and Douglas P. Olney (Eds.). The Hmong in the West:Observations and Reports. Minneapolis: Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, 1982. This is a report of the Hmong Research Conference, 1981. For literacy purposes the short note on pages viii-ix on the Hmong Roman orthography should be helpful, although the section on the language in the second volume of this series is more detailed (see below). Part three is devoted to the language and should give you some idea of the differences between Hmong and English. Marybeth Clark's "Some Auxiliary Verbs in Hmong" gives word for word translations of the Hmong before putting it into English which gives us some idea of what Hmong students are going through when they get to English. Barbara Robson's study of Hmong literacy and formal education and their effect on learning English in a refugee camp supports literacy in the native language before English. A sample of the test she used is attached to the end of the article.

Glenn L. Hendricks, Bruce T. Downing, Amos S. Deinard (Eds.). The Hmong in Transition. New York:The Center for Migration Studies of New York, Inc., 1986. This is a report of the second Hmong Research Conference, 1983. Bruce Downing introduces the section on language and literacy with some helpful notes. At least when I know that "nws" (English "she") is close to [nɔ] with a mid-low tone, I feel better. I found Gail Weinstein's "Investigating Literacy", part of which is a report of her four week stay with a Hmong family in the US, very helpful. It tells a lot about why our students' attendance is so erratic. Any material in literacy that is built on a heirarchy becomes suspect because of this attendance pattern. You have to start out each day as if it's day one. Weinstein shows us the many legitimate reasons for an absence.

Charles Johnson (ed.). Myths, Legends, and Folk Tales from the Hmong of Laos. St. Paul: Linguistics Department, Macalester College, 1985. If you are not interested in folk tales, at least the introduction to this book should be of help to you. Johnson, after long and painstaking work with his Hmong informants, has gained a very deep insight and knowledge of Hmong culture and in his introduction, he compares that culture with American culture. The differences are enormous, and it should be of immense help to a literacy program with Hmong to be aware of those differences. In the first number of this newsletter, we reviewed a book edited by Barton and Barton which called for a closer relationship between researchers and teachers in the field. Johnson, with the help of his wife, Evadale an ESL teacher, has followed that recommendation by putting many of his collected folk tales into small books suitable for Hmong in English literacy classes. The books, primers if you like, are graded and sometimes the same story appears in two different forms depending on the fluency of the reader. The book I'm now

looking at, The Monkeys and the Grasshoppers, measures 5 1/2 by 4 1/4. Small enough to fit into a man's pocket or a woman's purse. Each page of the story is illustrated with simple line drawings, not stick figures, shaded in the manner prescribed in the Nepalese study reported on in this newsletter. Some books in the series are bilingual. There are also cassettes available in both English and Hmong. All this material is available at a very low cost (30 cents for The Monkeys and the Grasshoppers) from Charles Johnson, Linguistics Department, Macalester College, 1600 Grand Ave., St. Paul, MN 55101. The Luthern Immigration and Refugee Service published Learning English which is a manual for sponsors of refugees. Full of suggestions. The final page has a list of dictionaries and phrasebooks for Vietnamese, Lao, Khmer, Hmong, and Chinese. There is no address so I suggest writing The Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20007.

James Paul Gee. "Orality and Literacy: From *Savage Mind* to *Ways with Words* ". TESOL Quarterly , 1987. This important article summarizes eight texts and how they deal with the question of what literacy is, and the position of the English teacher in literacy training. He ends up supporting the views of Scribner and Cole who found that schooling rather than literacy produces cognitive skills, and Scollon and Scollon who contend that "Literacy has no effects--indeed, no meaning--apart from particular cultural contexts in which it is used, and it has different effects in different contexts." I was delighted to see Herbert Graff's work in literacy highlighted. Graff found in his study of literacy in Canada in the 19th Century "It was *not* because you were 'illiterate' that you finished up in the worst jobs but because of your background (e.g., being black or an Irish Catholic rendered literacy much less efficacious than it was for English Protestants.)" And what was true of Canada can be seen in other societies including Britain and the US. Gee talks about the shift from talking about *Primitive* versus *Civilized* societies to *Nonliterate* versus *literate* societies. Perhaps this story about modern Egypt by Judith Miller in the New York Times is an example: " ...there were 746 incidents of 'rape and abuse' in this nation of 48 million in the last five years, low by Western standards. Fifty-three% were conducted in crowded places during the day, most by men between the ages of 20 and 30, 47% of whom were illiterate, and 35% of whom were semiliterate." What's the connection? Were the ovens at Auschwitz tended by illiterates? Gee goes on to call Shirley Brice Heath's Ways With Words a "classic". Heath feels that students must be taught foundations for the use of their literacy. How? Apprentice them to a school based person (the teacher in a new and expanded role) who will help students acquire the ability "to give *what* - explanations; to break down verbal information into small bits of information; to notice the analytic features of items and events and to be able to recombine them in new contexts, eventually to offer *reason* -explanations; and finally to take meaning from books and be able to talk about it." Heady for us in adult ESL with people who have never been to school but where we should be heading.

Pat Brennecke now of David S. Lake Publishers writes to us, "I've come across some materials in my work here that I think you might be interested in. One is the ALBSU Newsletter, a British publication about adult literacy and basic skills education. It's interesting to see the British point of view on these things. To get it write: Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7DA, England." Pat also recommends Literacy Work with Bilingual Students , and Conversations with Strangers, both available from the same address in England.

David Barton of Lancaster University sent us two copies of a bulletin published in England, RaPAL: Research and Practice in Adult Literacy . To subscribe write: RaPAL, Bolton Royd Centre, Manningham Lane, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD8 7BB. It costs £10 a year. I particularly like this question sent in by a reader, "If Frank Smith is right, and people learn to read by reading, how do they get enough information to start reading in order to learn by reading?" The next issue may carry the answer. The issues I've seen contain helpful conference reports, book reviews, and many suggestions on how to get teachers involved in simple relevant classroom research. Our next issue will summarize their first two numbers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Washington Area TESOL affilliate (WATESOL) has organized a SIG (Special Interest Group) for literacy. The purpose of the Literacy SIG is to provide a means for educators to exchange information and ideas regarding ESL in-

struction for students with little or no academic background who have minimal or no literacy skills. This SIG is unique in that it includes teachers representing all age levels of ESL instruction, adult, secondary, and elementary education. Such a cross section of teachers has resulted in a healthy and productive forum and has encouraged individuals to broaden their perspectives. For each fall and spring WATESOL convention the Literacy SIG offers special sessions dealing with literacy issues as well as a "What Works" session in which presenters share practical teaching suggestions. In addition, there is a newsletter which is mailed to literacy SIG members on a regular basis. The newsletter is used for important announcements and other pertinent information related to literacy instruction. Contact **Melissa King**, the organizer of the WATESOL Literacy SIG, for more details. Her address is 2626 Wooster Court, Vienna, VA 22180.

Virginia French Allen has written from Boulder, Colorado. She has written a book (mentioned in another part of this newsletter) and is active in both ESL and native language literacy. We're summarizing her long memo for the next bulletin.

Anne Crepeau writes from Brooklyn, NY, that she has just been given an ESL literacy class without any forewarning. She finds that her students don't know " '...how to look and how to analogize' as described" in John Driscoll's article in the first bulletin. She's looking for curricula in ESL literacy. Can you help her out?

Project Read UPDATE has this quote "...If your audience has poor reading skills, look for material with an uneven right margin, suggests the American Institute for Research. People who don't read well have trouble reading material with a justified right margin." **David Barton** from Lancaster U. wrote advising us of the same for this newsletter.

In the first bulletin we tried to define "literacy" as we saw it for this bulletin. Since then we have found yet another word, not in the OED nor in Webster's Unabridged. It's ALITERATE (pronounced [ey'litərət], I suppose.) It is applied to someone who can read but who never does. See Edwin McDowell in the New York Times 12-29-86.

Jill Bell (of Bell and Burnaby's A Handbook for ESL Literacy) is editing Literacy SIG Newsletter in Toronto. For a copy or to contribute a comment, question, or book review write to Jill Bell, Modern Language Centre, OISE, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ont M5S 1V6. The spring TESL Canada Convention will have a literacy symposium. We'll try to carry a report in the next newsletter.

Marilyn Sweeny writes from Elgin, IL, that in their ESL program for 400 students, 200 are literacy students. The program has in-class volunteer aids. (Eat your heart out.) To visit a class, contact Ms. Sweeny at the Elgin YWCA, 220 E. Chicago St.

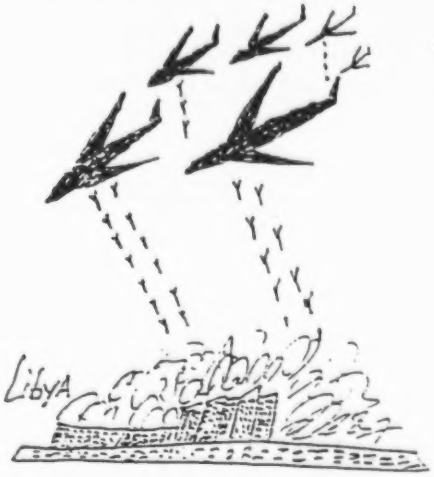
Dennis Terdy in Illinois put us in touch with **Joyce Fowlkes Campbell** in the US Department of Education. She's editing an adult ESL newsletter which will also carry literacy information. Write to her at Education Program Specialist, Division of Adult Education, Room 522, Reporters Building, 400 Maryland Ave. S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202-5515.

In our next volume, we plan to look at the relationship of phonetics to phonics. Has phonics kept up with or ever been in touch with what phoneticians have told us about English? Is phonics a little phoney? We want especially to look at phonics from an ESL viewpoint. We also hope to have the results of a study showing where you can get trained to teach ESL adult literacy. And finally we hope to have some help for those working with Mien students from Laos.

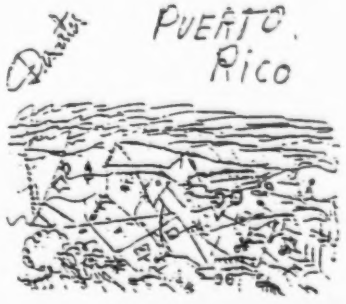
We want to thank Fran Baron, Director of Alemany Community College Center, for help with the printing of this bulletin and to Stanley Sherron, the printer. Thanks to those who wrote comments. We hope many more will contribute articles. Please keep them around 400 words. Deadline:October lst. To receive Vol. 2: No. l (November), send a 39 cent stamped self-addressed business sized envelope to SUSAN LAWSON, ESL LITERACY NEWSLETTER, ALEMANY COMMUNITY COLLEGE CENTER, 750 EDDY STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94109. [Editors:Carole Glanzer, Susan Lawson, Jack Wigfield]

ADDENDUM

Much of this number dealt with pictures. Here are some examples the pictures that were talked about in articles by Lawson, Safwat, and Wigfield.



I worry about two countries that are fighting each other. Please don't let them become a war like Vietnam.....



Tragedy in Puerto Rico. The people lived in there country it was very sad because too many families are crying now because all the family is dead. Some are lost and not found

yet.

Figure 2: *In the individualized language experience approach, each student first draws a story and then dictates the language to accompany it.*

I M F ROM LAOS

HMONG I 'M HMONG

YANG KHOUA

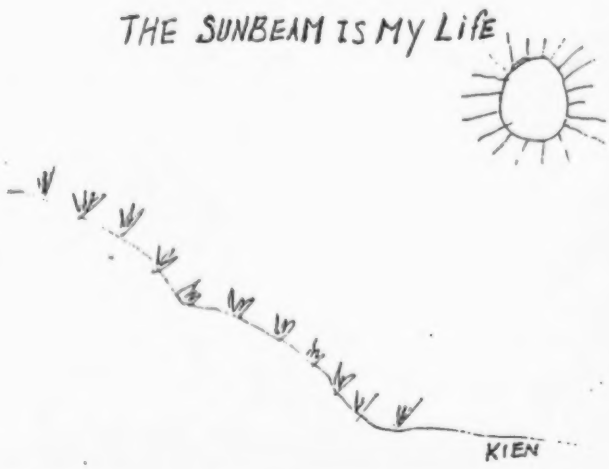
IAM GOING CALIFORNIA

IN THE WEST

(From Yvonne Safwat's " Getting Them on Their Literate Feet". Passage: A Journal of Refugee Education." Vol 2:No.2, 1986.

Can you interpret this Hmong Pa Ndau (Story Cloth)? Are those people men or women? How can you tell? What are they doing? Look at the person in the upper right corner. What's on his/her shoulder? What are the animals? Who carries the baby in Hmong society? (Owned by St. Paul Foundation)

(Answers: Some are men, some women. The women have an apron on which is barely visible in this reproduction. The hat and hair styles are different, too. Both men and women carry the baby. That's a gun on the shoulder of the man in the upper right hand corner. Behind him is a woman. It is customary for men and women not to walk side-by-side. The gun is handmade much like the old flint lock guns in this country. What are the animals? I don't know except for that horse. The rest weren't identified.)



I have one brother in West Germany. He's married. He has one boy and one girl.....

I was born in Vientian, Laos. I speak Lao. I had three people in my family.....